

# ***DOMESTIC VIOLENCE***

**Finding Safety and Support**

**Provided by the  
Employee Assistance Program  
of FAA**

**May 1998**

***National Domestic  
Violence Hotline:  
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)  
(or from a TDD 1-800-787-3224)***

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(or from a TDD 1-800-787-3224)***

The hotline answers nearly 10,000 calls each month from those experiencing domestic violence, as well as their family and friends. Callers are provided with crisis intervention, information about domestic violence, and referrals to local programs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in many languages.

All this help is just one phone call away:

**Crisis intervention** helps the caller identify the problem and possible solutions, including making plans for safety in an emergency.

**Information** about sources of assistance for those wanting to learn more about domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, intervention programs for batterers, working through the criminal justice system, and related issues.

**Referrals** to battered women's shelters and programs, social service agencies, legal programs, and other groups and organizations willing to help.

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# *Acknowledgments*

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We all know that domestic violence is a reality in our society; however, for the victim or the perpetrator, it is surrounded by denial, secrecy, guilt, and shame. By presenting this information in a booklet that can be distributed and read in privacy, we are hoping to confidentially reach those who need this information. Remember that no one has to stay in an abusive relationship. There *is* help!

# ***Introduction***

## **If you are a victim of domestic violence . . .**

This guide is primarily for you. It contains up-to-date information about the problem of adult domestic violence. Most important, it is intended to help you in your day-to-day efforts to stay safe. As you read this guide, please remember—

**You are not alone.**

**You are not to blame.**

**You do not deserve to be abused.**

## **If you know someone who is being abused . . .**

This guide will tell you how you can be most helpful to victims of domestic violence who are your friends and family, your neighbors and acquaintances, or your co-workers and employees. Professional helpers should also find this guide useful in their efforts to provide empowering and supportive assistance to battered women.

## **Note to readers:**

Adult domestic violence is one of the most serious public health issues and criminal justice issues facing women today. Because the vast majority of victims of adult domestic violence are women who are abused by their male partners, this booklet will refer to victims as female and abusers as male. But most of the information contained in this guide will apply to *all* victims regardless of their gender or the gender of their partner, including both gays and lesbians, and men who are physically abused by their female partners.

## *Some facts about domestic violence—*

### **❑ THE VAST MAJORITY OF ADULT VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ARE WOMEN.**

Between 91-95% of all documented reports of adult domestic violence are women abused by their male partners. About 1-2% is the physical abuse of men by their female partners. Intimate violence, however, is not limited to heterosexual relationships. The rate of violence in gay and lesbian relationships is estimated to be about the same as in heterosexual couples (around 20-30%), accounting for about 3-8% of the total number of documented reports. While there may be under-reporting of domestic violence by gay and lesbian victims and by men abused by their female partners, it is also estimated that fewer than one in ten cases of women abused by male partners is reported.

### **❑ Every woman is at risk for becoming a victim of domestic violence.**

Domestic violence happens regardless of socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, age, education, employment status, physical ableness, marital status, or childhood history. In fact, being female is the only significant risk factor for being a victim of adult domestic violence.

### **❑ Batterers use emotional, psychological, economic and physical abuse as a way of controlling their intimate partners. Abuse is not caused by stress, anger or alcohol/other drug involvement.**

Many people find it difficult to understand why men batter. So, when batterers say that they “lost their temper,” “had a bad day at work,” or were “drunk and out of control,” these explanations are often accepted by others. But battering has much more to do with a man’s attitudes and beliefs about how men and women should relate in intimate relationships than it has to do with the common excuses given by batterers. In general, batterers believe that they have a right to enforce their will on their female partners. It is this belief, coupled with society’s tolerance of domestic violence, that is at the root of domestic violence.

**❑ Domestic violence is a serious crime which often results in serious injury and even death.**

In the United States, battering is the major cause of injury to women aged 14-45, causing more injuries than auto accidents, muggings and rapes combined. One third of reported domestic violence assaults involve the use of a weapon and/or result in serious bodily injury. In addition, almost 25% of pregnant women seeking prenatal care have been battered during pregnancy. Of all female victims of homicide in the U.S., 30% are killed by husbands or boyfriends, a total of almost 1,500 women each year.

**❑ The majority of men who batter their female partners are also abusive to their children.**

Between 50-70% of men who abuse their female partners also physically abuse their children. The abuse of children is generally less severe than the abuse of the female partner, but as the violence against the partner gets worse, the child abuse also gets worse. There is also a high correlation between men who abuse their female partners and those who sexually abuse female children.

**❑ Children from families in which there is adult domestic violence often suffer negative consequences, even if they are not the direct targets of abuse.**

Children who witness their mothers being abused by their fathers often exhibit health problems, sleeping difficulties, anxiety, acting out behavior, and feelings of guilt, fear and powerlessness. They are at high risk for alcohol and drug use, teen pregnancy, homelessness, and suicide. Research suggests that there is an increased risk for boys who grow up in homes in which there is domestic violence to perpetrate domestic violence in their adult intimate relationships. Despite popular belief, girls who grow up in these families are not at increased risk for being victimized as adults because of their childhood history. The primary risk factor for being a victim is simply being female.

# ***What is domestic violence?***

Recognizing what behaviors are part of domestic violence is not always easy, even for victims themselves. This is in part because domestic violence is much more than physical abuse. In fact, many battered women who are controlled by their partners and who live in danger and fear have never been physically assaulted.

Understanding what domestic violence is means being aware of the many different things men do in order to control their female partners. The following checklist of behaviors may help you decide if you or someone you know is being abused.

## **Does your partner. . .**

### **Use emotional and psychological control?**

- \_ call you names, yell, put you down, make racial or homophobic slurs, or constantly criticize or undermine you and your abilities as a wife, partner, or mother?
- \_ behave in an overprotective way or become extremely jealous?
- \_ make it difficult for you to see family or friends, or “badmouth” your family and friends?
- \_ prevent you from going where you want to, when you want to, and with whomever you want to?
- \_ humiliate or embarrass you in front of other people?

### **Use economic control?**

- \_ deny you access to family assets like bank accounts, credit cards, or car?
- \_ control all the finances, force you to account for what you spend, or take your money?
- \_ prevent you from getting or keeping a job or from going to school?
- \_ limit your access to health, prescription and/or dental insurance?



## **Make threats?**

- threaten to report you to the authorities (the police or child protective services) for something you didn't do?
- threaten to harm or kidnap the children?
- make you afraid by using looks, actions or gestures?
- display weapons as a way of making you afraid or directly threaten you with weapons?
- use his anger or "loss of temper" as a threat to get you to do what he wants?
- threaten to expose your sexual orientation to friends family, or employer, if you are gay or lesbian?

## **Commit acts of physical violence?**

- carry out threats to hurt you, your children, pets, family members, friends, or himself?
- destroy personal property or throw things around?
- grab, push, hit, punch, slap, kick, choke, or bite you?
- force you to have sex when you don't want to or to engage in sexual acts that you don't want to do?
- prevent you from taking medications or getting medical care?
- deny you access to food, fluids or sleep?

These are some of the most common tactics used by abusive men to control their female partners, but certainly not the only ones. If your partner does things that restrict your personal freedom or that make you afraid, you may be a victim of domestic violence.

You are not alone. Millions of women are abused by their partners every year. The good news is that more resources are available now than ever before to help women and their children be safe.

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***If you are being abused,  
you have a right to be safe.***

# *The pattern of abuse*

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***The pattern of abuse is hard to recognize in the early stages.***

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Battered women consistently report that the abuse gets worse over time. As the abuse and isolation get worse, the level of fear and danger they experience increases. The higher the level of fear and danger, the more difficult it can be for battered women to achieve safety for themselves and their children.

The pattern of abuse can progress very slowly, making it hard to recognize in the early stages. Batterers use different tactics of control at different times, forming a distinct pattern that is very effective in establishing and maintaining control over the victim.

## **Escalation**

The escalation phase of the pattern of abuse may be a period in which the batterer uses a broad range of coercive tactics to control the victim, such as taking control of the finances, attempting to isolate the victim from potential sources of support, and using emotional abuse to wear away at the victim's self-confidence and self-worth.

These efforts to control are often made under the guise of good intentions, love, and concern—especially early on. For example, a batterer may constantly point out the difficulties of working full-time and raising a family as a way to get his partner to quit her job and therefore become more financially dependent on him. Or a batterer might attempt to isolate his partner from friends by persuading her to spend more time with him. The long-term effectiveness of these forms of control depends upon the batterer's ability to make the victim afraid to resist.

## **The Acute Incident**

The acute incident is an intense show of force intended to make the victim afraid and to firmly establish the batterer's control over her. While the acute incident is often a physical assault of some kind, the use of threats or the destruction of pets or property can also be effective ways of instilling fear and establishing control.

## De-escalation

In the de-escalation phase, batterers often apologize, promise not to repeat the abusive behavior, give gifts, or express a desire for sexual intimacy. For batterers, this “making up” behavior may help them ease any genuine feelings of guilt they may have. In addition, batterers may use these behaviors as a way to manipulate their partners’ emotions—to give victims hope that the battering won’t happen again. This can help batterers avoid negative consequences of their abuse.

## Progression of Violence

Early on in a relationship, when the controlling behaviors are typically less intense, less severe, and often imposed under the guise of “good intentions,” it is very difficult to clearly identify them as part of a pattern of abuse. As a result, the first acute violent incident may easily be considered by the victim (and by others) as an “isolated” incident of abuse. Coupled with her partner’s remorse and promises to never repeat the behavior, a woman

is easily persuaded to stay and “work it out.”

But over time, the victim may begin to see the repeated promises and apologies as empty, seeing little change (or an increase)

in her partner’s violence since the first acute incident. If the batterer’s “making up” behaviors no longer instill hope and motivate the victim to stay in the relationship, he may look for other ways to maintain control. Often, that means increasing his use of threats, violence or other forms of control, which increases a victim’s level of danger and fear—a process known as *entrapment*.

The fear, isolation, and confusion caused by this pattern of abuse can keep a woman “walking on eggshells,” often afraid to tell anyone what is happening or to reach out for help.

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***Violence gets worse, not because batterers “lose control,” but as a way for them to maintain control.***

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# ***Why do battered women feel trapped?***

Simply, because they often *are* trapped, but that doesn't necessarily mean there's no way out. There are many obstacles to achieving safety or to ending a relationship with a violent partner, and the choices women confront are not risk-free.

## **Risks of Seeking Help or Deciding to Leave**

### **Physical violence and psychological harm**

- Risk of escalated threats and physical violence, resulting in harm to victim, children, friends, or family
- Risk that batterer will follow through on suicide threats and harm himself
- Risk of continued harassment, stalking, and verbal and emotional attacks, especially if batterer has ongoing contact (such as during court-ordered visitation)
- Risk of serious physical harm and/or death

### **Children**

- Continued risk to children of emotional and physical harm; possibility of increased risks to children if batterer has unsupervised visitation
- Risk of losing children by parental kidnapping or as the result of a legal custody decision
- Risk of negative impact on children as a result of "breaking up the family"

### **Financial**

- Risk of reduced standard of living—possible loss of home, possessions, neighborhood
- Risk of losing income or job—may lose partner's income, may have to quit a job in order to relocate or to fulfill the responsibilities of single parenthood, may be prevented from working because of threats and harassment

## **Relationship**

- Risk of losing partner, losing the relationship
- Risk of losing help with children, transportation, household
- For elderly women or women with disabilities, risk of losing caretaker

## **Responses from friends, family members, and helping professionals**

- Risk of not being believed or taken seriously, being blamed, being pressured to do something she's not ready or able to do
- Risk of being judged as a bad wife, partner or mother
- Risk of being pressured to maintain the relationship based on religious and/or cultural beliefs or because the children "need a father"
- Risk that actions of "helpers" may increase danger

Under the best of circumstances, it is difficult to end a relationship with an intimate partner. Love, family, shared memories, and a sense of commitment are bonds that are hard to break. Battered women face the additional risks of physical, emotional and psychological harm. In addition, many battered women want the violence to stop, but they don't want the relationship to end.

Seeking help, getting an order of protection, or deciding to leave only makes sense to a woman when, on balance, it reduces the overall risks that she and her children have to deal with.

***There are risks attached to every decision a battered woman makes.***

—

***Safety planning is the process of evaluating the risks and benefits of different options and identifying ways to reduce the risks.***

# *Safety planning and risk assessment*

## **Use what you already know**

If you are a battered woman, you probably know more about safety planning and risk assessment than you might even realize. Being in a relationship with an abusive partner—and surviving—requires considerable skill and resourcefulness. Any time you do or say something as a way to protect yourself and/or your children, you are assessing risk and enacting a safety plan. You do it all the time. It's just not always a conscious process.

## **Think it through**

It can be a really helpful safety strategy to evaluate risks and make safety plans in a more intentional way.

Whether you are currently with your partner or have ended the relationship, and

whether or not you choose to use the available service system or to involve the police, there are certain things that are helpful to consider in planning for your future safety.

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***Whether you are currently with your partner or not, a safety plan can reduce your risk of being harmed.***

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## **Safety planning for every situation**

Safety plans can be made for a variety of different situations — for dealing with an emergency, such as when you are threatened with a physical assault or an assault has occurred; for continuing to live with or to date a partner who has been abusive; or for protecting yourself after you have ended a relationship with an abusive partner.

If you are planning to leave your partner or have already left, be aware that batterers often escalate their violence during times of separation, increasing your risk for harm, including serious and life-threatening injury. Making a separation safety plan can help reduce the risks to you and your children.

## **Identify your options**

The value of any safety plan depends on identifying options that are meaningful and workable for you. This guide will provide information on the help available from domestic violence programs and the criminal justice system, services that are designed to help victims of domestic violence. But equally important is the help and information you may get through other systems, including your own system of family and social supports. You may find people you can trust in a variety of places:

- Employee assistance program, supervisor, union, co-worker
- Counselor, social worker, therapist
- Doctor, Ob/Gyn, dentist, nurse
- Friends, family, neighbors
- Religious congregation member, minister, rabbi, priest
- Women's centers, displaced homemaker or senior centers
- Teachers, school counselors, PTA
- Department of Social Services caseworker

## **Evaluate your options**

Only you can judge who it's safe to tell about your situation and who to ask for help. Sometimes people who don't have good information about domestic violence respond to battered women in ways that aren't helpful, even when they mean well. On the other hand, you may feel more comfortable asking for help from someone you know. It's your call. The important thing is for you to identify all the possible people who might be willing and able to help you. Make a list with their phone numbers and attach it to your safety plan for easy reference.

## **Plan Ahead**

You don't need to wait for an emergency to ask for help. In fact, it's a good idea to talk to people who can help before there's a crisis and find out what they're willing and able to do for you. That way, you'll know in advance if you have a place to stay, a source of financial assistance, or a safe person to keep copies of important papers with.

It can sometimes be hard to ask for help. But you deserve help, and you may need it. And most people really do want to help. The more specific you can be with them about what you need, the more likely it is that you'll get the help you're looking for.

# *Personalized Safety Plan*

## **BEING READY FOR A CRISIS**

### **I can leave**

- ☐ If I decide to leave, I will \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. (Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells or fire escapes would you use?)
- ☐ I can keep my purse and car keys ready and put them \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ in order to leave quickly.
- ☐ I will leave money and an extra set of keys with \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ so I can leave quickly.
- ☐ I will keep copies of important documents or keys at \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ If I have to leave my home, I will go \_\_\_\_\_.  
If I cannot go to the above location, I can go \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ The domestic violence hotline number is \_\_\_\_\_. I can call it if I need shelter.
- ☐ If it's not safe to talk openly, I will use \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ as the code word/signal to my children that we are going to go, or to my family or friends that we are coming.

### **I can get help**

- ☐ I can tell \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ about the violence and request they call the police if they hear noises coming from my house.
- ☐ I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police and the fire department. I will make sure they know the address.
- ☐ If I have a programmable phone, I can program emergency numbers and teach my children how to use the auto dial.
- ☐ I will use \_\_\_\_\_ as my code word with my children or my friends so they will call for help.

### **I can use my judgment**

- ☐ When I expect my partner and I are going to argue, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons or in rooms without an outside exit.)
- ☐ I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give my partner what he wants to try and calm him down. I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.
- ☐ I can also teach some of these strategies to some/all of my children, as appropriate.



## PLANNING TO LEAVE

- ☐ I will call a domestic violence program and get help making my plans. The hotline number for the nearest program is \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ I will leave money and an extra set of keys with \_\_\_\_\_ so I can leave quickly.
- ☐ I will keep copies of important documents or keys at \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ I will leave extra clothes with \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ I will keep important numbers and change for phone calls with me at all times. I know that my partner can learn who I've been talking to by looking at phone bills, so I can see if friends will let me use their phones and/or their phone credit cards.
- ☐ I will check with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me money.
- ☐ I can increase my independence by opening a bank account and getting credit cards in my own name; taking classes or getting job skills; getting copies of all my important papers that I might need and keeping them with \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ Other things I can do to increase my independence include: \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ I can rehearse my escape plan and, if appropriate, practice it with my children.

## AFTER I LEAVE

- ☐ I can change the locks on my doors and windows.
- ☐ I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- ☐ I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.
- ☐ I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
- ☐ I can install smoke detectors and put fire extinguishers on each floor in my home.
- ☐ I will teach my children how to use the phone to make a collect call to me if they are concerned about their safety.
- ☐ I can tell people who take care of my children which people have permission to pick them up and make sure they know how to recognize those people.
- ☐ I will give the people who take care of my children copies of custody and protective orders, and emergency numbers.

## AT WORK AND IN PUBLIC

- ☐ I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and/or Employee Assistance Program about my situation. My work-place EAP number is \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ I can ask \_\_\_\_\_ to screen my calls at work.
- ☐ When leaving work, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ When traveling to and from work, if there's trouble, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ I can change my patterns—avoid stores, banks, doctor's appointments, laundromats and \_\_\_\_\_, places where my partner might find me.
- ☐ I can tell \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that I am no longer with my partner and ask them to call the police if they believe my children or I are in danger.

## WITH AN ORDER OF PROTECTION

- ☐ I will keep my protection order \_\_\_\_\_. (Always keep it on or near your person.)
- ☐ I will give copies of my protection order to police departments in the community in which I live and those where I visit friends and family.
- ☐ I will give copies to my employer, my religious advisor, my closest friend, my children's school and day care center and \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ If my partner destroys my order or if I lose it, I can get another copy from the court that issued it.
- ☐ If my partner violates the order, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.
- ☐ I can call a domestic violence program if I have questions about how to enforce an order or if I have problems getting it enforced.

## ITEMS TO TAKE WHEN LEAVING

- \_\_\_ Identification for myself
- \_\_\_ Children's birth certificates
- \_\_\_ My birth certificate
- \_\_\_ Social Security cards
- \_\_\_ School/vaccination records
- \_\_\_ Money, checkbook, bank books, ATM cards
- \_\_\_ Credit cards
- \_\_\_ Medications
- \_\_\_ Keys - house, car, office
- \_\_\_ Driver's license/car registration
- \_\_\_ Insurance papers
- \_\_\_ Public Assistance ID 's and Medicaid Cards
- \_\_\_ Passports, green cards, work permits
- \_\_\_ Divorce or separation papers
- \_\_\_ Lease, rental agreement or house deed
- \_\_\_ Car/mortgage payment book
- \_\_\_ Children's toys, security blankets, stuffed animals,
- \_\_\_ Sentimental items, photos
- \_\_\_ My Personalized Safety Plan

## MY EMOTIONAL HEALTH

- ☐ If I am feeling down, lonely, or confused, I can call \_\_\_\_\_ or the domestic violence hotline \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ I can take care of my physical health needs by getting a checkup with my doctor, gynecologist, and dentist. If I don't have a doctor, I will call the local clinic or \_\_\_\_\_ to get one.
- ☐ If I have left my partner and am considering returning, I will call \_\_\_\_\_ or spend time with \_\_\_\_\_ before I make a decision.
- ☐ I will remind myself daily of my best qualities. They are: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I can attend support groups, workshops, or classes at the local domestic violence program or \_\_\_\_\_ in order to build a support system, learn skills, or get information.
- ☐ I will look at how and when I drink alcohol or use other drugs. If I am going to drink/use other drugs, I will do it in a place where people are committed to my safety.
- ☐ I can read one or more of the books listed in this guide's bibliography that were written for battered women.
- ☐ Other things I can do to feel stronger are: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## REDUCE YOUR RISK

No battered woman has control over her partner's violence, but women can and do find ways to reduce their risk of harm. This safety plan is a tool to assist you in identifying options, evaluating those options, and committing to a plan to reduce your risk when confronted with the threat of harm or with actual harm.

There's no right or wrong way to develop a safety plan. Use what applies. Add to it. Change it to reflect your particular situation. Make it your own, then review it regularly and make changes as needed.

If you're unable to find a safe place to keep a written safety plan where your partner won't find it, maybe you can ask a friend to keep a copy for you. If not, you can ask your local domestic violence program to keep your plan for you. Whether it's safe to *write down* your plan or not, it's still important to *make* one.

***You don't have to figure it all out on your own.  
You can ask a domestic violence advocate for help.***

# ***What can a domestic violence program do for me?***

Local domestic violence programs are a vital resource, providing *free* and *confidential* assistance to battered women and their children. They provide emergency safety services such as shelter and 24-hour crisis hotlines. But you don't have to stay in a shelter to get help from a domestic violence program. Most programs provide a full range of non-shelter related services to battered women as well.

Domestic violence program advocates have accurate information about domestic violence and are experienced in providing assistance to battered women. They understand the criminal justice, family court, and social services systems, and are familiar with other community resources that might be useful to you.

In addition to giving you good information, advocates can often accompany you to court, to the police station, or to social services and provide you with practical and emotional support. Getting help from someone who has experience working with victims of domestic violence and who knows how to work with the different systems can make things a lot easier for you.

## **Available Services**

There are domestic violence services available in every state and in most counties. Specific services may vary from one community to another, but most programs offer the following core services.

### **Shelters/Safe Homes**

These offer a safe place for you to stay if you are in need of emergency housing. While there, you can learn about available options and develop a safety plan. If you have children, they can stay there, too. The location of the shelter is kept secret for the protection of the women and children who stay there.

### **24-Hour Emergency Hotline**

Advocates are available 24 hours a day to provide crisis intervention and emotional support, advocacy, information, admission into shelter, and referrals if the shelter is full.

## **Advocacy and Other Support Services**

Most programs offer some or all of the following services for women whether they are in a shelter or not: help in obtaining medical care, legal protection, housing, furniture, clothing, training and educational services, employment, social services, emergency transportation, and translation services.

## **Supportive Counseling**

One-on-one counseling provides information, emotional support, and help in identifying options and building solutions.

## **Battered Women's Support Groups**

These groups provide you with an opportunity to be with other women who have been abused and with whom you may have a lot in common. Support groups have helped many women feel less isolated and are a good source of information for developing safety plans. They can be a very safe place to talk about whatever is on your mind.

## **Services for Children**

Counseling and support are often available to help children understand what is happening and to give them a chance to talk about their feelings.

***You have rights—  
including the right to make your own decisions.***

You have a right to be believed by those you tell about the violence. You have a right to not be blamed for your partner's violence. You are the expert about your own situation, and you have the right to make your own decisions about what to do or not to do. You also have a right to be supported in whatever decisions you make.

Domestic violence advocates are often the best people to turn to in order to have your rights upheld. They are there to help you identify options and evaluate the risks and benefits of those options, not to pressure you to do something you're not ready or able to do. They're there to listen, to inform, and to support you. With a domestic violence advocate, you can expect to be treated with respect for your right to self-determination. Only you can decide what's best for you.

## ***What other services are available?***

Depending on your needs, communities across your state offer many services that can help you develop support systems, increase your financial independence, and build educational, work-related and/or daily living skills. Domestic violence programs are generally well informed about the services available to help you; so ask them for information and referrals. Referrals are frequently available to:

- Educational opportunities including GED or college degree programs, English as a second language classes, trade schools, and scholarship, grant, and stipend programs
- Programs that assist with job training and placement, professional development, resume writing, interviewing skills, and job searches
- Culturally specific services and groups, including those who have information regarding emigrants' rights
- Health-related services including primary care, family planning, pre-natal care, breast exams, pediatric care, and testing for sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV and AIDS
- Low-income housing programs, relocation assistance
- Alcohol or other drug recovery programs, mental health services, children's counseling services, parenting programs, support groups through women's centers, grief groups, and Parents Without Partners
- Child protective and preventive services

### **Learn from the experience of other battered women**

For every battered woman who has received accurate information about domestic violence or a helpful response from a mental health counselor, self-help group member or chemical dependency counselor, there's another woman who has received inaccurate information and sometimes even a *harmful* response. However well-intentioned, many counselors and helpers are uninformed or *misinformed* about domestic violence and respond in ways that aren't helpful to the victims.

## What to look for in a counselor

If counseling is a service you want, call your workplace EAP or community domestic violence program for suggestions. They may provide the service you are looking for. If not, they are likely to know of counselors who have been helpful to other battered women. If payment is a concern, ask for referrals to counselors who use a sliding scale fee. Of course, even the most reliable referral doesn't guarantee that you will feel comfortable or satisfied with a particular counselor.

In choosing the right counselor for you, look for a counselor who:

- makes your safety the priority (rather than the relationship), is willing to help you develop a safety plan that meets your needs, and supports your right to make your own decisions
- believes what you say, takes you seriously, takes the violence seriously, and doesn't judge you or make you feel ashamed about past physical or sexual abuse
- doesn't in any way hold you responsible for your partner's violence, and doesn't encourage you to change as a way to get your partner to change
- if you wish, is willing to involve a battered woman's advocate
- understands that domestic violence is about control, not about anger, stress, or alcohol or other drug use
- explores the effects of all of your partner's forms of controlling behavior on you—physical, sexual, economic, emotional, and psychological abuse
- demonstrates sensitivity to your cultural or religious beliefs
- doesn't assume that you are a batterer if you "hit your partner, too," but understand that many battered women use violence as a way to fight back or defend themselves

## Keep asking for help until you get what you need

No matter whom you decide to reach out to—a domestic violence advocate, employee assistance professional, counselor, friend, or self-help group member—if you are uncomfortable with the response that you get, don't give up. With any service provider or helper, you may have to ask more than once, or in a different way, in order for them to understand what you need. If that doesn't work, ***FIND SOMEONE ELSE TO TELL***. Then keep telling until you get the help that you need and deserve.

## ***What about help for my partner?***

Men who batter often do not accept full responsibility for their violent behavior. Instead, they blame their partners, stress, alcohol/other drugs, anger, loss of control, an unhappy childhood, or someone or something else. But the fact is, lots of people are under stress, drink, use drugs, get angry, or were abused as children. Yet most of these people do not

choose to use violence and coercion in their intimate relationships.

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***Even when batterers get help, it doesn't mean that they will stop being violent.***

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Battering is about an individual man's decision to use violence and coercion as a way to control his partner.

Batterers *can* change. But it means giving up patterns of behavior, attitudes and beliefs that they've probably had for a long time. That

kind of change doesn't come quickly or easily. Even when batterers say they want to stop and they get help, it doesn't guarantee that they will stop battering. So, even if *your* partner gets help, it is important to continue to plan for your own safety.

### **What if he attends a batterers' program?**

Most batterers who are in Batterers Intervention Programs (BIPs) are there because the Court ordered them to be there. Some men go voluntarily because they want to change. But many men promise to go in order to persuade their partners to stay with them or to take them back. Predictably, most of these men drop out of the program once they feel less worried about losing the relationship.

Although not available in all communities, BIPs are generally better sources of help for men who batter than mental health therapy or individual counseling. BIPs are educational groups designed to hold batterers accountable for both their physical violence and other forms of coercive behavior. These programs work exclusively with batterers because they understand that involving victims in their services is not only dangerous, but can interfere with the goal of men accepting full responsibility for their violence and coercion. Since not all BIPs operate in ways that make your safety a priority, ask your local domestic violence program for information about BIPs in your area.



While it may be a positive step for your partner to reach out for help from a BIP, it's not a guarantee that he will choose to stop his violent behavior or that you will be safe. Men stop being violent and abusive only when they decide they want to and they keep working at it. Many men who are attending or have attended a program continue to be violent and controlling.

### **What about marriage counseling?**

According to battered women who have been involved in marriage counseling, it not only doesn't work, it often makes things worse. One explanation for this is that going to counseling *together* suggests that a woman shares some of the responsibility for her partner's violence, a belief that many abusive men already have. So, couples counseling can help batterers to justify blaming their partners, and give them even more excuses for being violent. A batterer's violence is *his* responsibility, no one else's. It is unlikely that he will change unless he accepts full responsibility for his actions.

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***Whether your partner gets help or not, it's a good idea to plan for your own safety.***

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Another concern about couples counseling is that it is often unsafe for battered women to express their feelings and discuss the violence or the relationship in front of their partners. Many women report being threatened or assaulted after couples counseling sessions for things they said or did during the session.

Services that require victims to participate in joint sessions with their partners, including mediation programs and alcohol/other drug family treatment programs, increase victims' risk of physical and emotional harm and are therefore not recommended for dealing with domestic violence.

### **What if he stops drinking or using drugs?**

Even when men who batter stop drinking or using drugs, their violence most often continues. In fact, many battered women say that the violence *got worse* during substance abuse recovery. Alcohol and other drug abuse do not cause domestic violence, although batterers often use it as an excuse. Batterers who drink or use drugs have two *separate* problems—battering and substance abuse—that must be dealt with separately.

# *Using the police and the courts*

## **Know your rights**

Deciding whether to involve the police or to seek protection from the courts can be difficult. There are many risks: that the police or the

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***While using the legal system isn't without risk, the police and the courts can provide critical protection to victims.***

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courts won't treat the violence seriously; that they will blame you or not believe you; that your partner will attempt to retaliate against you; or that you won't get what you need because you don't know your rights.

The legal system is often intimidating and confusing and using the legal system will not *guarantee* your safety. Still, the legal system has much to offer in providing protections for battered women. Knowing what's available and what your rights are is an important part of planning for your safety.

## **Getting help from an advocate**

The following sections of this guide provide basic information about what the police and the courts can do for you. But exactly how the system works varies from one community to another, and there is no other case *just like yours*. For these reasons, if you are thinking about or are already using the police or the courts, it's a good idea to contact your local domestic violence program and talk to an advocate.

Among other things, a domestic violence advocate can tell you how things work in *your* community, help you weigh the pros and cons of using the system, and "walk you through" the entire process of making a police report, obtaining an order of protection, filing a violation, or petitioning for custody.

***Using the legal system can be very frustrating.  
Getting help from a domestic violence advocate  
can make it easier.***

# ***What can the police do for me?***

## **How do I know if calling the police will help my situation and make me more safe?**

Many states have passed family protection and domestic violence legislation which requires police departments to respond to domestic violence as the serious crime that it is. The

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***The Family Protection and Domestic Violence Intervention Act of 1994 mandates police to treat domestic violence as a serious crime.***

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“mandatory arrest” provisions explained on the following pages were designed to increase the protection provided to victims of domestic violence. You have the right to expect that if the police are called, they will do what the law says they should do. But, as with every decision about your safety, you are the best judge of whether involving the police is the best thing to do in your situation.

### **If you call the police**

If you call the police, they must come to investigate your situation. In order for the police to make a decision to arrest, they need to find probable cause that a crime was committed. That means that they must have enough evidence to believe that your partner committed a crime by harming or threatening you. Among other things, evidence includes:

- visible harm or injury to you or your children (for example, cuts, bruises, swelling, or torn clothes);
- damage to personal property such as furniture, walls, windows, car, or signs of a break-in;
- messages (either on your answering machine or written) threatening you or apologizing for having hurt or scared you;
- statements from you, your neighbors, children, family members, or anyone else who saw or heard what happened.

## **Under what conditions will the police make an arrest?**

An arrest is required in certain situations when a “Family Offense” is committed. Family Offense charges only apply to cases where the victim is related to the abuser by blood or marriage (including ex-spouses), or has a child in common with the abuser. Many communities have policies that also require arrests when crimes are committed between unmarried couples, dating partners and gay and lesbian partners.

**Felonies** - If the police find that your partner committed a felony against you, they *must* make an arrest.

An example of a felony is Assault in the Second Degree, which is an assault that results in serious physical injury like a broken bone, or a wound from a weapon, and creates “substantial pain” that lasts over a period of time.

**Family Offense Misdemeanors** - If the police find that a Family Offense Misdemeanor has been committed against you, state laws require arrest unless you ask the police not to arrest. But even if you ask the police not to arrest, many police departments will still make the arrest if they have evidence of a crime.

Examples of misdemeanors are Assault in the Third Degree, which involves an injury (usually more than a bruise) and substantial pain, and Aggravated Harassment, which is being threatened or harassed over the phone or by mail.

**Violations** - If the police witness a violation (sometimes called a petty offense) being committed, they have the authority to make an arrest, although they are not required to do so. If the police do not witness the violation or do not choose to arrest, you can make a civilian arrest. This does not mean that you must physically make the arrest, but just that you must sign a complaint against your partner. The police may either help you with this and take your partner to the police station, or give you information on how to get the court to take some action.

If your partner has harassed or threatened you more than once, or if you are afraid of future harm, tell the police. It may give them the evidence they need to charge your partner with a misdemeanor and to arrest him without your having to sign a complaint.

An example of a violation is Harassment in the Second Degree which is when your partner verbally threatens you with harm, slaps or pushes you, but doesn't cause an injury.

### **Your statement counts as evidence**

The statement you give to the police counts as evidence. Read your statement carefully. If something you think is important has been left out, or if something is inaccurate, don't sign it. Ask the officers to change the written statement to reflect what actually happened. Sign it only when it says what you want it to say.

### **What else can the police do for me?**

Even if the police do not arrest your partner, they can:

- help you and your children get medical care and/or get to a safe place
- take a statement from you to document the incident, which can be useful if you decide to call the police again or decide to go to court
- take photographs of your injuries or any damaged property

Every time the police respond to a Domestic violence call, they are required to give you a copy of the Domestic Incident Report that includes the following information:

- a Victim Rights Notice which explains your legal rights and includes information on local domestic violence services;
- their names and badge numbers so that you will be able to contact them again if you have questions or need to add information to the police report; and
- if they are not making an arrest, a written explanation of their reasons.

It's also a good idea to ask for a copy of the officer's investigative report.

### **What if the police response isn't satisfactory?**

If you aren't satisfied with the way the police are handling the situation, ask to talk to a supervisor. If you need assistance, call a domestic violence program and ask them for help in dealing with the police. Even if the police completely refuse to help you, it's possible to bring criminal charges by going directly to the District Attorney or to the judge. If you need to do this, it's a good idea to get a domestic violence advocate or an attorney to help you.

# ***What is an Order of Protection?***

An Order of Protection is a document issued by a court to help protect you from harassment or abuse. In an Order of Protection, a judge can set limits on your partner's behavior. Among other things, judges in all courts (criminal, family and supreme courts) can:

- order your partner to stop abusing you and your children;
- tell your partner to leave and stay away from your home, your workplace, and your family;
- direct your partner to have no contact with you—including no phone calls, letters, or messages through other people; and
- order your partner to stay away from the children, their babysitter, day care, or school.

In addition, family court judges can:

- decide issues related to custody, visitation, and child support;
- order the abuser to pay for expenses related to the abuse such as medical care and property damage; and
- decide on the division of certain kinds of personal property.

Once an order is issued, only a judge can change it. If the order includes a stay-away provision and your partner comes to your house, he is violating the order and can be arrested ***EVEN IF YOU INVITED HIM.*** If you want changes to an order, you must request them from the court.

## **How can an Order of Protection help?**

While an Order of Protection cannot guarantee your safety, it can help.

- Police are likely to take your calls more seriously if you have an Order of Protection.
- Your partner can be arrested and put in jail if he violates an Order of Protection. In fact, in certain circumstances, police are required to make an arrest.
- If you have left your home, an Order of Protection can make it easier for you to get the police to go with you to get your personal belongings.
- If you are being stalked or harassed at work, an Order of Protection can protect you at your job.
- Violations of certain provisions of an Order of Protection can result in your partner being charged with a felony.

## How do I get an Order of Protection?

Two types of courts are available to provide protection to victims of domestic violence—criminal and civil.

**Family Court** is a civil court with the goal of protecting you and your family. You can go to family court if you are legally married to, divorced from, or otherwise related to your abuser, or if you have a child in common with your abuser. If you are eligible for family court, you can choose to go to family court or criminal court, or both at the same time.

**Criminal Court** punishes crime by imposing fines, jail time, and/or probation. Criminal court is available to all victims of domestic violence whether or not they are related to the abuser.

**Supreme Court** is also a civil court. If you are getting a divorce, separation, or annulment, you can request an Order of Protection at any time before the trial or settlement is final. When an Order of Protection is part of a divorce order from supreme court, it is permanent and will not expire. But getting changes in a supreme court order can be difficult and expensive. So you should request that the Order include a provision that any future changes can be made in family court.

## How do I decide which court to go to?

If you are eligible for family court, you may want to consider the following factors in deciding between family, criminal court or both.

- To get a criminal court order, there must have been an arrest or a criminal charge.
- It is often easier to get a Temporary (or emergency) Order of Protection from family court.
- A family court Order of Protection can do more than a criminal court order.
- Criminal cases require a higher level of proof of what

happened than civil court cases and often take a longer time to be decided.

- For a case to proceed in family court, you must follow the case through; but in criminal court, the District Attorney can decide to follow a case through with or without your involvement.



# ***I think someone I know is being abused. How can I help?***

Many battered women either don't know who to turn to or have had bad experiences when they've reached out for help. Your willingness to help can be important to a victim in her safety planning efforts. But while being willing and well-intentioned is good, being prepared to offer the kind of help battered women need is even better.

## **Possible indicators of domestic violence**

The effects of domestic violence on victims are far-reaching and can emerge in many different ways. Awareness of these effects will not only help you better understand a woman's experience, but will help you better identify women who are being battered.

### **Visible physical injury** including:

- bruises, lacerations, burns, human bite marks, and fractures—especially of the eyes, nose, teeth and jaw
- injuries during pregnancy, miscarriage, or premature births
- unexplained delay in seeking treatment for injuries
- multiple injuries in different stages of healing.

### **Illnesses that battered women may develop include:**

- stress-related illnesses such as headaches, backaches, chronic pain, gastrointestinal disorders, sleep disorders, eating disorders, and fatigue
- anxiety-related conditions such as heart palpitations, hyperventilation, and “panic attacks”
- less commonly, depression, suicidal thoughts or attempts, and alcohol or other drug problems

**“Presenting problems”** are often related to, or a result of, domestic violence. These problems can include:

- marital or “family” problems
- alcohol or other drug addiction
- “mental health” problems

**In the workplace**, the effects of domestic violence can emerge as:

- lost productivity, chronic absenteeism or lateness, or requests for excessive amounts of time off
- on-the-job harassment by the abuser, either in person or over the phone
- poor employment history, or loss of employment

### **How can I know for sure if she's being abused?**

The only way to know for sure if someone you know is being abused is to **ASK**.

One of the common myths about battered women is

that they don't want to talk about their victimization. While many battered women do make efforts to hide the battering, they often do so because they fear embarrassment, their partner finding out, being blamed, not being believed, or being pressured to do something they're not ready or able to do. Directly asking a woman *in private*, without judgment, without pressure, and even without expectation that she will trust you enough to disclose, relieves her of the burden of coming forward on her own, and can tell her a lot about your concern, caring, and willingness to help.

Keep it simple. If there are specific observations that are the source of your concern, you might say something like, "I noticed 'x, y, and z,' and I'm concerned about you and wonder if there is something I can do to help." Or, "It seems you're stressed out and unhappy. If you want to talk about it now or some other time, I'll keep it between us."

People are sometimes hesitant to approach a woman about their concern for her safety because they feel that it is "none of their business," or that their offer of help will be unwelcome. But the notion that "what happens behind closed doors" is off limits is a notion that has contributed greatly to women's isolation from help and support. Your risk of being rebuffed is relatively minor in comparison to the risk of contributing to her isolation.

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*Let a battered woman know that you're concerned about her safety and that you're willing to help.*

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## **If you ask, be prepared to respond supportively**

There are many things you can do to prepare yourself to offer supportive and empowering assistance to a battered woman.

- **Educate yourself about domestic violence** Read this guide, talk to a domestic violence advocate, or read some of the materials listed in the back of this book.
- **Initiate a conversation in private** when you have enough time to talk with her at length, if she chooses to do so.
- Let go of any expectations you have that there is a “quick fix” to domestic violence or to the obstacles a woman faces. Understand that a woman’s “inaction” may very well be her best safety strategy at any given time.
- **Challenge and change any inaccurate attitudes and beliefs that you may have about battered women.** Battered women aren’t battered because there’s something wrong with them. Rather, they are women who become trapped in relationships by their partners’ use of violence and coercion. The better able you are to recognize and build on the resilience, courage, resourcefulness and decision-making abilities of battered women, the better able you will be to help them.

## **“Do’s” of providing supportive and empowering help**

- **Believe her**—and let her know that you do. If you know her partner, remember that batterers most often behave differently in public than they do in private.
- **Listen to what she tells you.** If you actively listen, ask clarifying questions, and avoid making judgments and giving advice, you will most likely learn directly from her what it is she needs.
- **Build on her strengths.** Based upon the information she gives you and your own observations, actively identify the ways in which she has developed coping strategies, solved problems, and exhibited courage and determination, even if her efforts have not been completely successful. Help her to build on these strengths.

- **Validate her feelings.** It is common for women to have conflicting feelings—love and fear, guilt and anger, hope and sadness. Let her know that her feelings are normal and reasonable.
- **Avoid victim-blaming.** Tell her that the abuse is not her fault. Reinforce that the abuse is her partner’s problem and his responsibility, but refrain from “bad-mouthing” him.
- **Take her fears seriously.** If you are concerned about her safety, express your concern without judgment by simply saying, “Your situation sounds dangerous and I’m concerned about your safety.”
- **Offer help.** As appropriate, offer specific forms of help and information. If she asks you to do something you’re willing and able to do, do it. If you can’t or don’t want to, say so and help her identify other ways to have that need met. Then look for other ways that you can help.
- **Be an active, creative partner in a woman’s safety planning effort.** The key to safety planning is taking a problem, considering the full range of available options, evaluating the risks and benefits of different options, and identifying ways to reduce the risks. Offer ideas, resources and information.
- **Support her decisions.** Remember that there are risks attached to every decision a battered woman makes. If you truly want to be helpful, be patient and respectful of a woman’s decisions, even if you don’t agree with them.

## Q U I C K L I S T

### **DO —**

- \_\_ *Ask*
- \_\_ *Express concern*
- \_\_ *Listen and validate*
- \_\_ *Offer help*
- \_\_ *Support her decisions*

### **DON'T —**

- \* *Wait for her to come to you*
- \* *Judge or blame*
- \* *Pressure her*
- \* *Give advice*
- \* *Place conditions on support*

# ***Safety for women in the workplace***

## **Did you know. . .?**

74% of working battered women are harassed by their abusive partners on the job; and of them, each year:

54% miss at least 18 days of work;

56% are late for work on at least 60 days;

28% leave early on at least 60 days; and

20% lose their jobs altogether.

Battered women consistently identify the lack of financial resources as a primary obstacle to separating from their abusive partners. For working women, battering can further weaken their financial security by compromising their ability to perform and keep their jobs.

## **Suggestions for workplace personnel**

In addition to the guidelines for helpers listed on previous pages, there is specific assistance that supervisors, human resources administrators, employee assistance professionals, and security staff specialists can provide that can better protect battered women in the workplace.

### **Supervisors/Managers**

- Be alert to the possible indicators of domestic violence as identified on the previous pages.
- Consult your EAP staff and/or Human Resource Management Division specialists to discuss your concerns and to determine a safe and supportive way to approach the employee.
- Maintain the employee's confidentiality at all times.
- Actively assist the employee in ensuring that Orders of Protection are honored by all relevant workplace personnel.
- Make sure your security staff has the information they need to best protect the employee at the work site (copies of court orders, photograph of the abuser, etc.).
- If possible, arrange flexible work hours so that the employee can handle legal matters, court appearances, child care, etc.
- When necessary, and if possible, transfer the employee to another work location.

## **Human Resource Management Division**

- Be a resource to both the employee and the supervisor.
- With the employee's knowledge and consent, assist the employee in contacting the EAP contractor.
- Encourage the employee, with the help of the EAP contractor's professional counselor, to develop a safety plan.
- Work with the supervisor on pay and absence arrangements.

## **Employee Assistance Program**

- Be a resource to the employee, supervisor, and the Human Resource Management Division.
- Be available, even during an employee's absence, to provide information and to make appropriate referrals.
- With the written consent of the employee, act as a liaison with outside agencies providing services to the employee.

## **Elements of a workplace safety plan**

- ☐ Is the travel route between the employee's home and work safe? Is the employee's parking arrangement safe? Are current child care arrangements safe?
- ☐ Does security staff and co-workers have the information they need to help protect the employee, such as a photograph of the abuser? How else can security assist the employee?
- ☐ If the employee is temporarily residing in a shelter or some other confidential location, do designated workplace personnel have emergency contact information?
- ☐ Is the employee's work schedule flexible enough for her to manage court appearances, legal matters, and child care without having to take a cut in pay or unpaid leave?

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11. *Safety for women in the workplace* was adapted with permission from *Guidelines for Providing Assistance in Managing Family Violence Situations Involving Polaroid Corporation Employees*, policy drafted by Polaroid Corporation, ©1995, Cambridge, MA.

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# ***State Agencies for the Five States in FAA's Southwest Region***

**Arkansas** Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
#1 Sheriff Lane, Suite C  
Little Rock, AR 72114  
501-812-0571  
501-812-0578 FAX

**Louisiana** Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
P. O. Box 77308  
Baton Rouge, LA 70809-7308  
504-752-1296  
504-751-8927 FAX

**New Mexico** Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
P. O. Box 25266  
Albuquerque, NM 87125  
800-773-3645 (NM only)  
505-246-9240  
505-246-9434 FAX

**Oklahoma** Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
& Sexual Assault  
2200 North Classen Boulevard, Suite 610  
Oklahoma City, OK 73106  
800-522-9054 (OK only)  
405-557-1210  
405-557-1296 FAX

**Texas** Council on Family Violence  
8701 North Mopac Expressway, Suite 450  
Austin, TX 78759  
512-794-1133  
512-794-1199 FAX

# *Central Oklahoma Agencies*

## *Canadian County*

**Women's Service and Family Resource Center**

**Crisis Line (405) 262-4455**

## **Cleveland County**

**Women's Resource Center**

**9424 (405) 364-**

**Crisis Line (405) 360-0590**

## **Grady County**

**Women's Service and Family Resource Center**

**Crisis Line (405) 222-1818**

## **Oklahoma County**

**YWCA Domestic Violence Crisis Line**

**1866 (405) 949-**

**YWCA Domestic Violence Services (405) 947-4506**

## **Pottawatomie County**

**Project Safe Services**

**9953 (405) 273-**

**Crisis Line (405) 273-2420**